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SUBJECT: CONGRESS PASSES MAJOR COUNTER-TERRORISM LEGISLATION

REF: MANILA 465

¶1. (U) In a special session called by President Arroyo, the House of Representatives on February 19 approved the bicameral conference version of the Human Security Act of 2007, major counter-terrorism legislation that gives the Philippine government greater ability to investigate and prosecute terrorism crimes, which the Senate had earlier approved. (reftel). The bill will next go to the President for signature once an official copy is printed and signed by appropriate House and Senate leaders, which could take a week. President Arroyo has repeatedly signaled her intention to sign it immediately. Once signed, the law would take effect two months after the May 2007 elections.

¶2. (U) In a meeting with visiting Congressman Steve Chabot (R-OH) and Pol/C on February 20, House Speaker Jose de Venecia noted that the final version was "very different" and "significantly weaker" than the bill the lower House had originally approved in April 2006, but underscored his and fellow legislators' resolve to ensure this quick passage of the compromise bill so that the government would soon have additional tools in its important fight against terrorism.

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